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OVER 1,100 SEXUAL PREDATORS ARRESTED DURING U.S. MARSHALS "OPERATION FALCON II"

Houston, Texas – Just one year after the United States Marshals Service (USMS) announced the apprehension of more than 10,000 violent fugitives as part of "Operation FALCON" ("Federal And Local Cops Organized Nationally"), the USMS has done it again. Earlier today, U.S. Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzalez and Marshals Service Director John F. Clark revealed that more than 9,000 fugitives, including 1,102 fugitives wanted for committing felony sex offenses, violent sexual assaults, and failure to register as sex offenders, had been arrested during Operation FALCON II, which took place from April 17 to April 23. Three hundred twenty-eight fugitives were arrested in the Houston metropolitan area.

Over the course of the seven-day operation, Deputy United States Marshals, in cooperation with hundreds of federal, state, and local law enforcement partners in 27 states, primarily west of the Mississippi, and the territories of Guam and Northern Mariana Islands arrested more than 9,000 violent fugitives. One example of the type of offender captured in this operation is Carlos Bermudez. Bermudez, 30, was wanted in Las Vegas, Nevada since 2004 for 10 counts of sexual assault of a minor and 10 counts of lewdness with a minor. A team of Deputy Marshals and officers from local and federal agencies arrested Bermudez on April 21, 2006 in The

Woodlands, Texas. Bermudez is accused of sexually assaulting and touching a young boy repeatedly over a three year period from 2001 to 2004. Bermudez is currently in Harris County Jail waiting extradition to Las Vegas, Nevada. He has been named as one of the Top Fifteen “worst of the worst” offenders in Operation FALCON II.

Another example is Harold Watson, who was wanted by Harris County authorities for aggravated assault with a deadly weapon. A team of Deputy U.S. Marshals from the Southern District of Texas and state and local law enforcement officers arrested Watson in Houston on April 19, 2006.

“The many law enforcement officers that participated in Operation FALCON II made this operation an enormous success,” said Ruben Monzon, United States Marshal for the Southern District of Texas. “The capture of Bermudez and others we have arrested in this district demonstrate the power of law enforcement when we partner up with our federal, state, and local counterparts. “

“In Houston, the US Marshals combined this operation with the Houston Police Department’s own ‘Abusers are Losers’ initiative which targeted family violence offenders “ said Marshal Monzon. “The police department’s willingness to combine the two violent offender operations contributed to this year’s success.”

Like last year, Operation FALCON II coincided with the Department of Justice’s “National Crime Victims’ Rights Week.” In announcing the results of the fugitive initiative, Attorney General Gonzales praised the efforts of both the Marshals Service and the hundreds of participating agencies, noting that “the significance of holding it during this week was that it allows the victims and their families to find some element of closure. Just as we recognize the survivors for their courage, we applaud all of the law enforcement officers for their dedication.”

In the Houston, three hundred twenty-eight fugitives were arrested. Twenty-eight were wanted for violent sexual offenses, including rape, forcible sodomy, and sexual assault, and nineteen were wanted on charges for failure to register as sex offenders. Deputy Marshals and local task force officers also arrested two individuals wanted for homicide, seventeen wanted for gang-related crimes, and one hundred twelve wanted on assault charges. During the seven day operations, teams also seized firearms in eight arrests and seized drugs in nine arrests.

Director Clark reinforced the sentiments of both the Attorney General and Marshal Monzon. "It is fitting that the theme of this year's National Crime Victims' Rights Week is 'Strength in Unity,'" stated the Director. "Operation FALCON II does justice to this theme by honoring the victims and their families who have suffered indignities at the hands of violent criminals. The force-multiplier effect of the Marshals Service working together with thousands of our federal, state, and local partners has, once again, produced results that are unmatched in law enforcement."

Nationally, Deputy U.S. Marshals and their law enforcement partners arrested a total of 9,037 fugitives, and cleared more than 10,419 felony warrants during the seven-day operation. Task force members arrested 462 fugitives wanted for a variety of violent sex offenses, 311 fugitives for other felony sex crimes, 783 unregistered sex offenders, 73 homicide arrests with 87 warrants cleared, and 163 documented gang members. They also cleared 2,941 drug cases, and seized 111 guns, more than \$120,265.00 in cash, and more than 91 kilograms of narcotics.

Fugitives whose cases were adopted by Operation FALCON II were wanted by the Marshals Service, other federal agencies, United States Attorneys, and courts at every level of government. Because the highest priority was given to sexual predators and unregistered convicted sex offenders, the USMS entered into a partnership with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, which provided high-profile cases and facilitated contacts with state agencies that maintain sex offender registries. The USMS also worked closely with the

Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) to ensure maximum support for cases involving narcotics and weapons.

PHOTOS/VIDEO AVAILABLE

The Marshals Service Office of Public Affairs has photos of actual arrests during Operation FALCON II available to press at www.usmarshals.gov/falcon2, as well as fact sheets on arrests nationwide and in each of the agency's participating. A ten-minute B-roll video package for broadcasters will be available for satellite distribution on April 27 at 2:30 -2:45 pm EDT (11:30 – 11:45 am PDT) at C-Band coordinate IA 6 T-17 Downlink Frequency 4040 V 93 degrees WL, and at 6:30 – 6:45 pm EDT (3:30 – 3:45 pm PDT), and 10:00 – 10:15 pm EDT (7:00 – 7:15 pm PDT) at C-Band coordinate IA 6 T-16 Downlink Frequency 4020 H 93 degrees WL.

PARTICIPATING AGENCIES

A complete list of all of the federal, state, and local agencies that participated in Operation FALCON II is available at the USMS website at www.usmarshals.gov/falcon2

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